

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**SHADES OF GRAY:
GRADUAL ESCALATION AND COERCIVE DIPLOMACY**

by

Alan J. Stephenson, LCol, CAF

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Advisor: Dr. Grant Hammond

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*I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness,
nor the arrow for its swiftness,
nor the warrior for his glory.
I love only that which they defend.*

*Lord Farimir – Lord of the Rings
J.R.R. Tolkien*

Understanding and articulating the nature of war has challenged mankind from the beginning. Although the character of war continues to evolve with societal change, it never goes beyond its most basic tenant, the use of force to solve political problems. Virtually all Western societies have adopted Carl Von Clausewitz's premise that war is a continuation of politics by other means; hence, it is accepted in democratic nations that the military will be subservient to duly elected political leaders. Since ultimate accountability rests with civilian leadership, the universal challenge has always been to determine the extent to where legitimate political intervention in military affairs becomes counterproductive political interference. This premise, however, assumes that the role of the military can easily be separated and compartmentalized from grand strategic goals.

History abounds with examples of governments using military force to achieve political aims in a manner that does not truly constitute the strategic nature of war. Terms such as Gun-Boat Diplomacy, Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC), Small Scale Contingencies (SSC) and Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) attempt to capture the nebulous region between peace and war where civilian authorities retain significant control of the military power used to achieve political purpose. In the past decade, technological innovation, coupled with doctrinal change, has demonstrated that even limited war can be orchestrated much more precisely to achieve a desired political end-state.

One such doctrinal shift is that of parallel campaigns, a strategy espoused by John Warden III for Operation Desert Storm and recently adapted for use in business. “Parallel campaigns are not only fast, they have the flexibility to ‘turn on a dime’ when circumstances warrant. This adapting in real time is crucial.”¹ Since military planners fully embrace the concept of parallel warfare in military strategy, it should not be difficult to accept that this principle can be applied in coercive diplomacy at the grand strategic level as well.

The President of the United States (POTUS) has at his disposal the full might of the four pillars of national power (socio-political, economic, information, and military) to utilize in the pursuit of American interests. Although this has always been the case, limited technology and geo-political circumstances have generally restricted grand strategy to sequential application of coercive diplomatic measures. American military strategy has been dominated by the idyllic Weinberger-Powell doctrine for the past two decades. It has significantly influenced a generation of American military leaders into believing that the use of military force is a ‘black and white’ issue that is easily set to formulas. With no peer military competitor on the near horizon, asymmetric warfare and the gradual application of military force in pursuit of grand strategic goals will become more prevalent. Although it is incumbent upon military leaders to focus on providing the best military strategic advice for a given problem, grand strategy may dictate a less than desirable military use of force. This paper will argue that although not ideal militarily, gradual escalation in the use of military force for grand strategic purposes has ideological, theoretical, and historic roots. It is therefore essential that military leaders

understand and are prepared to fulfill desired political end-states that may not be their preferred option.

COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

In very simple terms, there are really only two ways to make another nation compliant to one's wishes of their own free will. You can either convince them through dialogue and reward (positive reinforcement) or coerce them through threat or use of minimal power projection (negative reinforcement). Otherwise, as Carl Von Clausewitz correctly points out, a nation must go to war to physically force or gain control of the other nation. “Force – that is physical force - is thus the means of war; to impose our will on the enemy is its object. To secure that object we must render the enemy powerless; and that, in theory, is the aim of warfare.”²

Although the term ‘coercive diplomacy’ has come to be associated primarily with military force, coercive diplomacy best describes a nation’s coercive use of the four pillars of national power in the foreign relations arena. Hence economic and diplomatic sanctions must also be considered coercive use of force at the grand strategic level since they are “coercive measure[s] ... taken by a group to enforce demands”³. In some instances, the results of economic and diplomatic coercion can be identical to those obtained through the application of physical force. It is therefore logical that the leader of a nation, such as POTUS, may choose to apply “the basic instruments of national power”⁴ against another nation in a measured, gradual fashion to achieve or ‘shape’ a desired end-state.

In *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, the White House has made American diplomatic strategy very clear. “We must be prepared and willing to use all

appropriate instruments of national power to influence the actions of other states and non-state actors, to provide global leadership, and to remain a reliable security partner for the community of nations that share our interests⁵. By identifying “all appropriate instruments of national power”, the White House sends a clear signal that their actions will not be constrained to linear, formulated approaches. International Relations is an intricate, complicated business that at times resembles a high stakes poker game. In this game of subtleties, it is nonsensical to believe that national leaders would not use all elements of national power in a graduated fashion to avoid unintended consequences. “Coercion is a dynamic process of move and counter-move, and adversaries shape their strategy to exploit U.S. weaknesses.”⁶ This, however, is the antithesis of current American military doctrine that seeks ‘decisiveness’ whenever U.S. forces are employed.

The Kosovo Conflict may be considered a prologue to future regional conflicts in the manner by which it evolved. All aspects of coercive diplomacy were utilized to modify the unacceptable behavior of Serbia. The international community, led by the U.S., applied economic sanctions, diplomatic sanctions, coercive military presence, and finally military force to achieve the ultimate goal of bringing Serbia back into the sphere of acceptable international behavior. The Kosovo Conflict thus transcended the boundary of diplomatic coercion into the realm of limited warfare. However, “many Air Force leaders criticized the limited nature and gradualist approach to Allied Force as being contrary to Air Force doctrine, which they interpreted as eschewing limited fighting.”⁷

Milosevic was a wily adversary, “manipulating key factors of US-style coercion [coercive diplomacy] to reduce the costs inflicted or to convince the United States to abandon its effort”⁸. The efficacy of the coalition’s effort was hampered by political,

diplomatic, and military leaders not understanding and controlling the dynamics of gradual coercive diplomacy in response to Milosevic's counter-moves. To complicate matters, General Wesley Clark was both the U.S. Commander in Chief, European Command (CINCEUR) and the NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) answerable to two separate 'political masters'. Unity of command starts with unity of political direction, thus CINCEUR and SACEUR could not effectively represent two differing grand strategies.

Being a defensive organization by design, NATO leaders should have recognized this issue from the start. Grand strategy should have been formulated either through the NATO Secretary General via the North Atlantic Council (NAC) or through a designated lead nation. The difficulties encountered in mounting an effective military campaign were not due so much to gradualism, as expressed in General Clark's book *Waging Modern War*, as to NATO's ineffective command and control of grand strategy. The White House's insistence on direct control of American targeting opened a Pandora's Box by setting a precedent for all other national leaders to follow and ultimately undermining the operational effectiveness of the coalition forces. As Gen. Clark recounts, "At first we were able to restrict detailed target approvals to the U.S. channel, but others then sought detailed access, and the process continued to open".⁹

COERCION

Coercion is a tool available from the tactical to strategic level. It can be found throughout history and in literary works from William Shakespeare's *Henry V* to Al Pacino's portrayal of a Mafia kingpin in *The Godfather* series. Coercion is a real, customary method of shaping human behavior that is ideally suited for gradual escalation

in times of crisis. Coercion has always been an element of political power and especially of warfare. As previously mentioned, military coercion is distinct from war when properly contained. Thomas Schelling was the first to articulate a detailed coercion theory in his book *Arms and Influence*. He viewed war as ‘brute force’, destroying the enemy’s capabilities, and contrasted it with the utility to intimidate or coerce an adversary. “The power to hurt is bargaining power. To exploit it is diplomacy – vicious diplomacy, but diplomacy.”¹⁰ Schelling believed in a strategy where gradually increasing the costs of resistance would eventually induce an adversary to capitulate when the decision was made that the costs had become too high. He did not argue against the necessity for war, but believed it was far more efficacious to coerce by gradually increasing the risk of punishment rather than to destroy outright.

Robert Pape, who applied the idea of coercion to air power, also views coercion as distinctly different from complete military victory.

Although coercers and war fighters may seek identical goals, such as the reduction of political aims, agreement to a cease-fire, withdrawal of forces, or even surrender, how they attain them are quite different. Brute force first routs opposing forces on the battlefield and then imposes political demands on a defenseless victim, bringing the defeated government to the point where it no longer controls organized forces capable of significantly impeding the victor’s operations. By contrast coercion seeks to change the behavior of states that still retain the capacity for organized military resistance. As a result, coercion seeks to achieve the same goals as war fighting, but at less cost to both sides. While the coercer hopes to attain concessions without having to pay the full cost of military victory, the target may perceive that accepting the assailant’s demands will be less costly than fighting to a finish.¹¹

This in fact is the essence of the argument. Not all political objectives can be successfully met by destroying and rebuilding. Effective solutions can be shaped and the military possesses unique capabilities that can be employed to modify an adversary’s

behavior. As with schoolyard discipline, a coercive strategy does not always work, but it is a humane approach. There will be times when punishment and war are the only options, but the key is to know what approach to use when and for how long.

Operation Allied Force over Kosovo was just such an application of coercive diplomacy. The cumulative effects of economic and diplomatic sanctions in concert with a gradual increase of military force aimed at modifying Serbian behavior rather than its outright defeat eventually caused Milosevic to capitulate. Decisive military action was evident at the tactical and operational levels; however, in the final analysis, the military contribution amounted to an element, albeit the decisive element, of coercive diplomacy. However, “simply taking a successful coercive strategy in one case and assuming that the same strategy will prove equally effective against a very different adversary is a recipe for disaster.”¹² Just as the use of brute force does not solve all problems, examples of failed attempts at coercion abound. The important aspect of gradual escalation in the use of force in military coercion is understanding the pros and the cons of such a strategy, and then preparing for all possible outcomes, including eventual warfare.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The declaration of war is a political act that encompasses much more than simply sending the military off to do battle. It has domestic and international ramifications that make political leaders hesitant to make such declarations, hence we have ‘police actions’ in Korea, ‘counter-insurgency operations’ in Vietnam, and ‘conflicts’ in Kosovo and the Persian Gulf. By restraining military action, political leaders maintain far more control over events since “the strategic fact of historical experience is that once the dice of war is rolled, policy achievement is largely hostage to military performance”¹³. It is the amount

of control over resources and the use of brute force in the name of the nation that truly establishes whether or not the nation is in a state of war. Military leaders desire a free hand to conduct war; political leaders desire a free hand to conduct coercive diplomacy. Unfortunately for the warrior in the field, the death and destruction surrounding him in both instances is the real face of “war” regardless of who is in charge; however, combat operations do not in themselves constitute war. Herein lies a fundamental difficulty in further discussion if one holds the bipolar view that there are only two states of existence, either war or peace.

Bridging the gap between peace and war has been an area of debate for years. As command and control of military power has become easier due to advances in technology, it has also become more centralized. No longer does the political leader have to declare war before he bids farewell to the ship’s captain to legitimize military actions taken in the name of the nation over the next year. As command, control, communication, computer, and intelligence (C⁴I) technologies improved, there has been less inclination to resort to brute force at the onset of disputes since the application of constrained military force can be more carefully managed. As well, abiding by international laws and norms have taken on greater importance for the lone superpower in this monolithic environment. The White House is quite clear, “Leadership in the United Nations and other international organizations, and durable relationships with allies and friendly nations, are critical to our security.”¹⁴ By not resorting to the political act of declaring war, political and military leaders have developed terms such as LIC, SSC, and MOOTW to try to capture this nebulous region of military coercion (undeclared war) but run into problems when ‘shades of gray’ mix.

COERCIVE FORCE AND COERCIVE PRESENCE

In essence, there are only two forms of military action bridging peacetime operations and war, coercive presence and coercive force. When the local police force patrols neighborhoods, they are conducting coercive presence activities. When the carrier battle group conducts freedom of navigation exercises, they are demonstrating coercive presence. Humanitarian relief operations and United Nations (UN) unarmed observation stations are peaceful activities making use of military resources for national interests. Although they may be deemed coercive activities by some belligerents, they do not represent armed intervention and are therefore not military coercion. Armed peacekeepers are much like police officers in establishing a coercive presence, ready to use deadly force if necessary in the conduct of their duties. Hence any display of armed military force, with the intent of using armed force if necessary, can be considered coercive military presence. For friends and allies, this may be a welcomed presence, but for adversaries this can be intimidating and a useful warning.

Coercive military force is the intentional use of force in coercive diplomacy short of limited war. The transition from coercive force to limited war is not precise. It depends on both the degree of control passed from government to the military as well as the application of military force itself. Thus, leaning on both Schelling and Clausewitz, we can define limited war as ‘a politically approved military campaign aimed at using brute force to render an enemy powerless’. The limited aspect of war is based on constraints and limitations placed upon military commanders, whether they be political, economic, geographic, temporal or simply the number of participants and level of effort.

In peacemaking, weapons demonstrations, raids, strikes, and non-permissive noncombatant evacuation operations the use of force is expected, if not applied in a premeditated fashion. This is coercive force at the grand strategic level. Operations at the tactical and operational levels must be decisive, but the overall military strategy may be less than rendering the adversary powerless. The slippery slope into limited warfare comes when leaders allow gradual escalation of coercive military force and do not establish a pre-determined level of force or a termination point where political leaders cede control to the military commander to render the adversary powerless with decisive force. If a structured military campaign is not desired, political leaders must decide to modify their grand strategic approach or revise further use of military force in pursuit of diplomatic goals. As with preventative medicine, the pre-emptive use of coercive force may well eliminate the need for radical solutions later on, i.e. full-scale war. Thus, the use of coercive force is ultimately a national policy decision, not a military one, that requires close coordination and clear decision points to avoid the pit-falls of Vietnam.

The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine attempted to set military power aside from the other three pillars of national power by establishing a series of six tests to determine the appropriateness of using military force. Although laudable in its attempt to protect the military from the vagaries of poor leadership and decision-making, it fails ultimately because it does not fulfill grand strategic needs. As Jeffery Record correctly points out,

The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine's implicit rejection of force as an instrument of diplomacy is perhaps its greatest flaw. Indeed, the doctrine stands Clausewitz on his head holding force to be a substitute for rather than a companion to diplomacy. Threatened or actual use of force is the heart of coercive diplomacy, and force may have to be threatened or used early in a crisis to avoid a larger war later, thus violating another cherished Weinberger-Powell injunction – i.e. force as a last resort.¹⁵

Secretary of State George Schultz stood firmly against the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Weinberger Doctrine arguing that it was an unreasonable set of preconditions that would likely never be attained and would greatly restrict America's duties as a world leader.

A quick review of U.S. military operations since SecDef Weinberger introduced the doctrine in 1984 clearly illustrates Schultz's point. Despite the military's stated doctrine, political leadership has continued to use U.S. military power as a diplomatic tool in a measured fashion. "Cruise missile attacks, which promise extreme accuracy, have increasingly become the option of first resort when coercive force is deemed necessary."¹⁶ Coercive force has been used to send messages to Libya, Sudan, and to Bin Laden in Afghanistan (Aug 1998), as well as to effect change in Panama and Grenada.

THE APPEAL OF GRADUALISM

Judeo-Christian belief dominates Western attitudes and concepts of war. Augustine of Hippo taught that:

morality demands that soldiers accomplish their mission with minimum loss of life, not only to friendly forces, but to the enemy as well. ... Let necessity, therefore, and not your will, slay the enemy who fights against you. As violence is used toward him who rebels and resists, so mercy is due to the vanquished or the captive, especially in the case in which future troubling of the peace is not to be feared.¹⁷

With this religious approach, Augustine and others laid the foundation for what has become the secular, internationally recognized, justification for going to war; the 'Just War Theory' or *Jus ad bellum*. His belief that "it is a higher glory still to stay war itself with a word, than to slay men with the sword, and to procure or maintain peace by peace, not by war",¹⁸ still resonates throughout western cultural values today. It is therefore understandable that American society would expect that all avenues of resolution be

explored before the application of deadly force is pursued for ‘just cause’ whether domestically or internationally.

Not only do citizens require ‘just cause’, but other nations in the world community look for reasonable proportionality as well. The U.S. has worked diligently to create a world of universal rules, values, and institutions based on its own image. Adversaries and allies alike weigh the actions of the U.S. against the international norms of justice when U.S. military force is applied. Unilateralism can quickly destroy the very institutions that are in America’s own best interests, hence the United States’ desire for international legitimacy through the UN and NATO in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo Conflicts. “The United States may have the raw power to dominate others and influence outcomes, but this ability threatens weaker states. Unless this power is managed carefully, those most affected by US hegemony are likely to coalesce against it.”¹⁹ Thus American decision-makers must carefully consider the consequences on international relationships when using ‘brute force’ in the pursuit of U.S. interests. Disproportionate use of force is just as unacceptable internationally as it was domestically at Waco, Texas, or Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Grand strategy may therefore dictate a ‘wait and see’ approach with gradual escalation of force rather than ‘decisiveness’ with unintended consequences.

USE OF MILITARY POWER

From Sun Tzu to the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, the view in using military force is consistent. War is the last recourse and should be avoided if at all possible. “Attaining one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the pinnacle of excellence. Subjugating the enemy’s army without fighting is the true pinnacle of excellence.”²⁰ War is an expensive venture and cannot be taken lightly. It has human,

economic, and political costs that are not always self-evident. As Colin Gray rightly points out,

[Modern military] strategy is about the use of military power in support of political goals, but statesmen in peacetime, and even generals and admirals in peacetime, can rarely be confident about the probable performance of their military instrument in war..... War is still a gamble. Whether one is anchored temporally in the 1900s or the 2000s, one cannot take exception to Clausewitz's observations that 'no other human activity [than war] is so continuously or universally bound up with chance. And through the element of chance, guesswork and luck come to play a great part in war'.²¹

The costs and uncertainties of war inevitably lead statesmen to seek less severe solutions.

The Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, outlined the Bush Administration's military strategy in the Quadrennial Defense Review 2001. "The strategy that results is built around four key goals that will guide in the development of U.S. forces and capabilities, their deployment and use:

- Assure allies and friends of the United States' steadiness of purpose and its capability to fulfill its security commitments;
- Dissuade adversaries from undertaking programs or operations that could threaten U.S. interests or those of our allies and friends;
- Deterring aggression and coercion by deploying forward capacity to swiftly defeat attacks and impose severe penalties for aggression on an adversary's military capability and supporting infrastructure; and
- Decisively defeating any adversary if deterrence fails."²²

In analyzing these four key goals, it is readily apparent that only the last goal constitutes war. Assuring allies and friends is accomplished through presence and actions.

Dissuading adversaries and deterring aggression are acts of coercive presence and coercive use of force. These three key goals lend themselves to gradual escalation prior to the use of decisive force in defeating an adversary or, in other words, war. It is obvious that these goals are not intended to be followed in succession, but they do indicate the government's intention for a multilateral, graduated approach in the use of military force.

SEA AND LAND POWER

Gradual escalation is not without military precedent. Navies around the world have made great use of coercive presence and coercive use of force, leaving deadly force as a tool of last resort. Naval Rules Of Engagement (ROE) are structured such that should the mere presence of a warship not deter an adversary, the ROE can be changed to bring about a close coercive presence. Should the target ship fail to conform to directions following verbal and/or signaled warnings, then the ROE can be 'ratcheted up' to a demonstration of coercive force by a 'shot across the bow'. The next step may include disabling or boarding the ship prior to outright destruction.

In fact the U.S. Navy 'sailed' counter-flow to the Army and Air Force doctrines regarding the application of military force in the early 90's when they issued "Forward ...from the Sea". "Backing away from the centrality of warfighting as the justification for naval power, '... From the Sea' established the line that naval power was uniquely valuable in the nation's political-military tool kit for what it could contribute to peacetime stability, deterrence, and crisis control. Naval power could be used flexibly and precisely across a range of missions, 'from port visits and humanitarian relief to major operations."²³ "Naval forces", through their ability for gradual application of

military force “are [indeed] an indispensable and exceptional instrument of American foreign policy”.²⁴

The navy and marines are well suited to establish coercive presence worldwide and apply selective coercive force when needed. They have a long history of projecting U.S. military power diplomatically. The U.S. Army, on the other hand, is not as well suited for quick, flexible response. The shear magnitude of moving the Army into a region sends a very strong signal to potential adversaries – “We are here, we are serious, and we are ready to use brute force!” This, however, does not mean that the Army can not be used in coercive diplomacy. Much to the contrary, the Army possesses a wide array of tools to effectively conduct MOOTW. Although training for war is the warrior’s *raison d’être*, substantial national dividends occur if war can be avoided through coercive presence and selective use of coercive force. Much as the U.S. Army provided presence and force in opening the Western United States in the late 1800s, so too do peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts contribute to global security. Similarly, as peer rivals disappear and adversaries elect non-combative approaches to challenge the U.S., the Army may become less relevant as the purveyor of brute force and may need to reassess its position on the uses of military force. As the U.S. Army’s chief historian, General John S. Brown recently wrote, “If the Army’s foreseeable future is to be restoring law and order where it has collapsed, why not prepare for the role early?”²⁵

AIR POWER

The Persian Gulf conflict saw the emergence of air power as a precise, self-contained, decisive military tool.

Used correctly and under the proper conditions, air power can play a major role in successful coercive diplomacy. The Gulf [and Kosovo]

War revealed the awesome potential for modern U.S. air power to destroy a vast array of targets with speed and precision. This unparalleled capability, combined with the flexibility and versatility of air power, suits it for providing escalatory options, disrupting adversary military operations, or leaving an adversary vulnerable to a magnified third-party threat.²⁶

Rapid advances in aviation technology and their strategic application are making the U.S. Air Force an extremely effective tool in coercive diplomacy. Longer loiter times of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), the weaponization of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV), stealth technology, precision guided munitions (PGM), and limitless advances in C⁴I are but a few examples of USAF capabilities that can be specifically tailored for use in coercive diplomacy. The air force vision of ‘global reach’ makes the USAF akin to the USN in its ability to project power from international ‘waters’ abrogating the need for third-party agreement. “Air strikes are increasingly seen by the U.S. public and by many policy makers as a low cost, low-commitment tool. Many of the constraints hindering the coercive use of air power are not technical – they are political and diplomatic.”²⁷ With the advent of ‘no fly zones’, limited precision air strikes, and global reach exercises, the 1990s, in fact, represent the manifestation of ‘air power diplomacy’ as a tool of military coercion.²⁸

KOSOVO

As mentioned previously, the Kosovo Conflict is an important study in coercive diplomacy leading to limited war. On March 24, 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commenced Phase I of the OP ALLIED FORCE air campaign against Serbia with the intention of driving the Yugoslavian army out of Kosovo. Coalition aircraft targeted the integrated air defense system, command and control facilities, and other military sites throughout Yugoslavia. Phase II commenced three days

later with a broader campaign against command posts, depots, communication facilities, and troops in Kosovo. Slowly the operation began to target the infrastructure in and around Belgrade in Phase III. Both General Clark, SACEUR, and Lt. Gen. Short, the NATO Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC), expressed frustration at the limitations and constraints placed upon them by NATO governments. After 78 days of non-stop bombing, Milosevic capitulated and ordered his troops out of Kosovo.

From the outset, there was little doubt that NATO could achieve air superiority. In fact, NATO aircraft enjoyed air supremacy throughout the campaign. As air power theorist Giulio Douhet espoused, “To have command of the air means to be in a position to wield offensive power so great it defies human imagination”²⁹ and, indeed, NATO was in such a position. The fact that NATO chose not to employ the full might of its air power attests to the fact that grand strategy was dominant, reinforcing Clausewitz’s view that “the political object – the original motive for the war – will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires”.³⁰ Political considerations drove the levels of military force required in Kosovo in concert with diplomatic efforts, not simply military objectives. However, “for the military, it meant that the diplomacy aimed at degrading or damaging Yugoslav assets, rather than destroying them, left military leaders in the lurch when initial coercive diplomacy failed”³¹.

Throughout Milosevic’s presidency in the 1990s, international governments applied a variety of physical and non-physical approaches to try to modify his unacceptable behavior. Diplomacy and economic sanctions failed to alter Yugoslavia’s nationalistic policies, and the military posturing of October 1998, as well as January

1999, did little to deter Milosevic from continuing his course of action. As a result, the international community was left little choice but to directly employ military force.

Both Gen. Clark and Lt. Gen. Short complained of the limitations and constraints placed upon them by the NATO alliance. SACEUR was not convinced that air power alone could force Milosevic to the negotiating table and was disturbed that the weight of public opinion was limiting air strikes. Lt. Gen. Short, at odds with Gen. Clark's priority on Serb ground forces as well as NATO's cautious escalation of the conflict, groused that he could have ended the war much sooner if he had been able to utilize the full extent of the air power available to him. Lt. Gen. Short has stated, "I think we were constrained in this particular conflict to an extraordinary degree and were prevented from conducting an air campaign as professional airmen would have wanted to conduct it."³² He would have preferred to go straight to Belgrade from the outset with a total weight of effort to force Milosevic's hand.

Experience and doctrinal foundations made it difficult for many senior military leaders to accept the political dimension of the military effort. Preparing the 'political battlefield' is as much a concern to any war effort as the battle itself. Public opinion, coalition sensitivities, political end-state, and the inevitable 'frictions of war'³³ had a significant impact on NATO's grand strategy. The time dimension was an important factor in the overall approach. Diplomatic initiatives took time to mature once hostilities began and it was cumulative pressures that eventually eroded the Serbian public's resolve. "It is unclear whether 'going downtown' immediately might have served to dampen rather than intensify Serb fears of NATO escalation. Attacking Belgrade heavily from the outset might have had the perverse effect of 'killing the hostage' – that is,

causing enough damage to convince the Serb leaders that they had little to lose by holding out longer.”³⁴

Ultimately it is our political masters who are held accountable for the decision to employ military force; however, it is the military commander who is accountable to the men and women who bravely serve their nation. NATO military commanders have every right to challenge the haphazard way that OP Allied Force evolved. It was totally unacceptable for NATO leaders to rely completely on a limited three-day air plan to bring about desired results without preliminary approval of subsequent military actions in case of failure. However the most vociferous condemnation can rightly be directed at the political interference witnessed at the operational level. National targeting approval should have been agreed upon before hostilities began with a continuous, review resolution process imbedded. These are the sorts of ambiguities that alarm military commanders and lead to fear of gradual escalation and coercive diplomacy.

In the final analysis, it is hard to argue that the conflict in Kosovo was not a qualified success; there were no allied personnel losses, collateral damage was kept to historic minimums, Milosevic is in jail, and Serbia is once again a functioning democracy. As World War I French Premier George Clemenceau eloquently declared, “War is too important to be left to generals”. Had NATO gone ‘downtown Belgrade’ immediately and beaten the Serbs decisively in half the time, would the results have been better? Military force (air power) brought this situation to the culminating point, but it was the ill-defined, yet ultimately successful, grand strategy that ensured completeness and a satisfactory end-state.

EMBRACING GRADUALISM

History is replete with examples of successful use of diplomatic coercion. John F. Kennedy's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis is perhaps the penultimate example of civilian sagacity prevailing over collective military wisdom.

To the Joint Chiefs of Staff the issue was clear. *Now* was the time to do the job for which they had been preparing contingency plans. Cuba I had been badly done; Cuba II would not be. The missiles provided the *occasion* to deal with the issue they were prepared for: ridding the Western Hemisphere of Castro's Communism. The security of the United States required a massive air strike, leading to an invasion and the overthrow of Castro. Convinced that this time the President had no real alternative, the Joint Chiefs advocated their option with an abandon that amazed other members of the ExCom. For example, after Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay had argued strongly that a military attack was essential, the President asked what the response of the Russians might be. General LeMay replied: "There would be no reaction." The President was not convinced. As he recalled on the day the crisis ended, "An invasion would have been a mistake – a wrong use of our power. But the military are mad. They wanted to do this. It's lucky for us that we have McNamara over there."³⁵

The author of American gradualism, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, provides the segue between two extreme examples of gradual escalation that deeply affected the American military psyche, the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam.

Whereas President Kennedy attributes McNamara's ability to successfully find a compromise solution to the crisis, the animosity that was generated between the administration and the Joint Chiefs of Staff only served to create two 'solitudes' that cascaded into the events of Southeast Asia. "Without a common understanding of the objective of military force or of the limitations that the president considered necessary to avoid escalation, the JCS continued to recommend actions that Kennedy privately viewed as extreme. The divergent civilian and military views of American objectives during the

Cuban missile crisis foreshadowed what would become a major obstacle to the development of a strategy for the Vietnam War.”³⁶ McNamara, emboldened by his Cuban success, became Lyndon Johnson’s dominant advisor on military matters following John F. Kennedy’s assassination.

The Vietnam War is a case study in diplomatic mismanagement from the beginning; however, in marginalizing military leaders during his tenure as SecDef, McNamara sowed the seeds of defeat. Kennedy and Johnson facilitated the promotion of ‘compliant’ senior officers to the JCS thus enabling McNamara and the JCS in pursuing differing war objectives. It has been well documented that truth was the first casualty of the Vietnam War. “It was to make clear the steady, unremitting use of false information by one administration after another that Daniel Ellsberg decided to make public the Pentagon Papers. The disclosures of what the government had really been doing came as a thunderbolt.”³⁷ As new revelations into the lies, deceit, and manipulation of information by the administration emerge with study of the Johnson White House conversations, it will become abundantly clear that it was not the theory of gradual escalation that caused America’s defeat in Vietnam but failed leadership from the President on down. Eleven years of combat is unquestionably a misapplication of coercion theory on a grand scale.

Unfortunately for the soldiers in the field, political interference and military acquiescence placed unreasonable limitations and constraints on operations and resulted in failure and death. It is completely understandable that combatants such as Gen. Colin Powell and Gen. Wesley Clark would be indelibly changed by the traumas of a mismanaged war and would work diligently to ensure that a repeat of the Vietnam

experience would never occur on ‘their watch’. It is regrettable, however, that ‘the baby was thrown out with the bath water’. Misapplication of coercive theory and gradual escalation ultimately resulted in military doctrine abrogating responsibility for operations that were not ‘overwhelming and decisive’ and ignoring an important area of warfare that has become exceedingly relevant with the demise of the Soviet Union.

Gen. Powell argued determinedly against becoming involved in Yugoslavia as not being in America’s interest. This reflected his ‘doctrinal’ approach to American military intervention and not the reality that America has a global role outside of narrowly defined self-interests. Although Gen. Clark acknowledged in his book *Waging Modern War* that “NATO’s reliance on airpower reflected the needs and goals of coercive diplomacy”³⁸ in the Kosovo Conflict, he personally held the view that “many of us in the United States had seen early on the fallacies of gradualism. It was, after all, the thinking that lay behind the early, unsuccessful years of deepening American involvement in the Vietnam War”³⁹. It seems incongruous that Gen. Clark understood he was engaged in coercive diplomacy, but tried to conduct the campaign according to the tenets of the Weinberger-Powell doctrine.

How did the demons of Vietnam color SACEUR’s, and other senior military officers’, approach to OP Allied Force given that coercive diplomacy and gradual escalation go ‘hand in hand’? Had senior political and military leaders recognized their line of attack as ‘coercive diplomacy’, would they have been able to convey one grand strategic approach (unity of command) instead of pursuing individual national inputs and prepare properly for the possibility that coercive diplomacy might fail and limited warfare would ensue? If SACEUR had clearly articulated that NATO was engaged in

‘coercive diplomacy’, might that have better prepared the warriors in the field for their role in carrying out the missions?

The lesson to be learned from OP Allied Force is that when overwhelming military force is available, democratic political leaders are less likely to unleash its fury than to manipulate its potential. In Kosovo, “victory was as much the result of diplomacy as air power. The real danger now is that the success of OP Allied Force might not energize U.S. services and the joint community to identify and then resolve serious deficiencies in the relationship between policy and strategy, strategy formulation, operational planning, and operational thinking.”⁴⁰

The Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2 series still does not adequately address the role of air power in military coercion. “Current aerospace-power doctrine is a two-edged sword. One edge utilizes doctrine as a marketing tool to compete in the joint service arena for future military programs, while the other edge attempts to guide airmen in sound warfighting principles. The challenge is to minimize the marketing utility of doctrine and maximize the operational relevance to the warfighter.”⁴¹ It is imperative that options are well documented for the warrior in the field and gradual escalation in coercive diplomacy is just another arrow in the quiver to be used when appropriate.

The USN is realistic in its recognition of coercive presence and coercive use of force. Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Jay L. Johnson wrote,

Naval deterrence and crisis-response operations prevent aggressors from achieving a fait accompli. Having combat-credible naval forces on scene shapes the battlespace and demonstrates our capability to halt aggression early in a conflict, well before the aggressor can achieve his objectives. These efforts to deter aggression and resolve crises, while prudent, do not always succeed – but our efforts make a profound difference in how we think about our role in a potential conflict. Our ability to shape the battlespace well before a joint campaign commences

is vital because even small changes in the early stages of a conflict can have a major impact on its outcome. We focus on halting aggression early in a conflict. We enhance the credibility of deterrence by thwarting the potential aggressor who hopes to prevail by delaying or disrupting the U.S. response.⁴²

All services need to reflect on the reality of gradual implementation of military force and address it in an open and honest way. Effects Based Operations (EBO) can be accomplished just as readily through slow, methodical escalation as well as quick, decisive action depending on the desired outcome. Ignoring a viable and often applied approach based on previous misapplication is not only an abrogation of responsibility, it is a dereliction of duty. Both political and military leaders need to study and understand military coercion and gradual escalation if they are to successfully employ such a strategy.

DILEMMA OF GRADUALISM

The greatest risk of using coercion is that it may backfire and precious strategic advantages may be lost. Threatening an opponent may have the reverse effect of provoking an increase in adverse behavior and making him more intransigent. Coercion may well lead to an adversary questioning the coercer's commitment. Time and space expand for the opponent allowing dispersion and concealment of forces, development of countermeasures, and other preparations for conflict. Time and space work against the coercer if national resolve is questionable. Gradual escalation may condition resistance in the adversary much as a prisoner of war reacts to infliction of pain by captors.⁴³ As well, "adversaries can capitalize on [self imposed] constraints and win a coercive contest despite being militarily, politically and economically inferior."⁴⁴

The cost-benefit analysis of gradual escalation versus decisive action must weigh both the long term and short term costs. The costs to democracies are different than to totalitarian regimes. Political costs mount substantially with gradual escalation in democracies whereas totalitarian regimes, oblivious to the costs of resistance on their people, will bide their time for fear of internal costs in compliance. Coercion therefore rests on acceptable understanding of an adversary's motivations. Vietnam is a prime example of misidentifying an opponent's motivation. America was 'fighting the creeping tentacles of godless communism' whereas Ho Chi Minh was not engaged in an ideological battle, but a war for independence. The tenets of American coercion in Vietnam were therefore misplaced and thus doomed to failure.

Gen. Clark's observations about the dangers of 'political micromanagement' in gradual escalation are true. It is in this context that the military must accept that its forces will be used in gradual, escalatory ways to achieve ill-defined diplomatic goals and must therefore work hard to understand and define this area of 'warfare' to avoid undue political interference. Gen. Clark is also correct in his assessment that "the operation in Kosovo violated almost every one of these principles [of war] as it began"⁴⁵. This, however, need not have been the case. Coalition warfare does not imply war by committee. By understanding coercion and escalatory approaches, doctrine can be developed to assist both military and political leaders in deciding if, when, and how such a strategy should be employed. By defining the Kosovo Conflict as coercive diplomacy, the NATO effort could have been structured to ensure 'unity of command', particularly in grand strategy. As the 'world leader', this would have entailed the U.S. working through one organization rather than two.

Clear objectives, economy of force, and the other principles of war, would be facilitated by developing strategies and doctrine for implementing politically sensitive applications of military force. Works by Schelling, George, Freedman, Pape, Byman, Waxman and others should be studied and incorporated into military thinking. An unpublished research paper by Jan van Angeren, *Airpower Diplomacy: The Art of Coercion In Modern International Arena*, attempts to formulate a decision-making process to deal with coercive military intervention. There is no reason that operational staffs who prepare strategic plans for decisive action could not be trained to prepare options for escalatory operations based on coercive theories. Decision-making matrices can be constructed based on identification of compellent or deterrent situations that utilize Pape's strategies of punishment, risk, denial, and decapitation to formulate options based on adversarial counter-moves. The important first step is to acknowledge that military force can and will be used in a gradual, escalatory fashion to fulfill grand strategy. The chasm between political and military leaders that formed during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations must never occur again. That will require both parties to understand and accept the dilemmas of coercive diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

There is no question that the fundamental purpose of the Armed Forces is to win a nation's wars, but pragmatically a military is often used as a tool to fulfill grand strategic objectives that do not entail war. Advances in technology now allow close coordination of elements of grand strategy, particularly in the realm of coercive diplomacy. National leaders are better able to undertake parallel campaigns utilizing the four pillars of power in effecting change in the international arena. It is natural that both the public and

political leaders turn to basic human values when assessing necessary military action. The foundation of American culture and international law holds that physical force be kept in check and used only when absolutely necessary.

The spectrum of military operations can be divided into five distinct areas according to the degree of control that the government passes to the military. In peacetime political leaders retain full control of military operations through guidance and directives. During coercive presence operations, authorization for the military to arm and use deadly force is generally defensive in nature. Coercive force requires a greater degree of freedom in applying deadly force both offensively and defensively based on tightly controlled criteria. Limited war occurs when political leaders pass authority to the military to apply brute force to render an adversary powerless under constraints, while total war is when all national effort is directed towards the application of brute force with minimum constraints.

Current doctrinal approaches, such as SSC and MOOTW, encompass all the elements of military power, but do not adequately address the continuum of force application. They compartmentalize actions as either / or ‘war’, reflecting the tenets of the Weinberger-Powell doctrine. In grand strategic terms, as well as by DOD definition, Kosovo was a SSC. The Global War on Terrorism, on the other hand, is indeed a war as it seeks to meet the political objective of making terrorist organizations powerless. Since the coercive nature of men and women in arms is a tool that easily lends itself to coercive diplomacy in grand strategy, the two components of military coercion (coercive presence and coercive force) will tend to be used in a gradual, escalatory manner.

Both the Persian Gulf and the Kosovo Conflicts illustrate the changing face of military power in the 21st century. The economic and military dominance of the U.S. challenges the traditional association of military force with all-out war. Politicians now have many more avenues to explore when implementing grand strategy. They have greater flexibility in determining an acceptable end-state when using a relatively ‘precise’ instrument rather than wielding a blunt hammer. Kosovo proved that judicious application of air power can bring about success and not “involve the opponent’s outright defeat.”⁴⁶ Grand strategy won out over military strategy in the choice to escalate force in a calculated fashion rather than swiftly gaining victory. Patience was indeed a virtue and a sensible choice given the present end-state.

It is critical, therefore, that military doctrine accept the concept of gradual escalation in coercive diplomacy as a valid exercise of military force. Although military leaders must continually press for clear objectives and decisive action from political leaders, it may not always be possible. Gen. John Jumper captured this reality following OP Allied Force:

From the air campaign planning point of view, it is always the neatest and tidiest when you can get a political consensus of the objective of a certain phase, and then go about achieving that objective with the freedom to act as you see militarily best. But that is not the situation we find ourselves in. We can rail against that, but it does no good. It is the politics of the moment that is going to dictate what we are able to do.... If the limit of that consensus means gradualism, then we are going to have to deal with a phased air campaign with gradual escalation.... We hope to be able to convince politicians that is not the best way to do it, but in some cases we are going to have to live with that situation.⁴⁷

It is therefore incumbent upon military leaders to study and understand limitations and constraints of gradualism in order to develop the tools to properly prepare warriors. As Liddell Hart reminds us, “while the horizon of [military] strategy is bounded by war,

grand strategy looks beyond war to the subsequent peace.”⁴⁸ Military action is governed by political direction and military leaders must be able to comprehend and appreciate the desired political end-state. Gradual escalation of military coercion is one option available to those who are ultimately accountable to the nation – our political leaders.

While the military may prefer a black and white world of war or peace, the reality is a world that consists of ‘shades of gray’. “A strategy of coercive diplomacy and gradualism is well suited in dealing with contests of choice rather than those of necessity. It is not an all (war) or nothing (inaction) situation.”⁴⁹ Military leaders now need to understand and articulate their role in the gray world of gradualism and coercive diplomacy.

¹ John Warden III, *Winning In Fast Time* (Montgomery, AL: Venturist Publishing, 2002), 142.

² Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Micheal Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 75.

³ David Guralnik, ed., *Webster’s New World Dictionary: Second College Edition* (Toronto: Nelson, Foster & Scott Ltd., 1974), 1259.

⁴ Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, 14 November, 2000 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), v.

⁵ The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, December 1999, 3.

⁶ Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, “Defeating US Coercion”, *Survival*, Vol 41, No.2, Oxford University Press, Summer 1999, 108.

⁷ Mary Hampton, “Eagle in the Field of Blackbirds: U.S. Military Lessons Learned and Applied in Bosnia and Kosovo”, *Cooperation or Competition? American, European Union and German Policies in the Balkans* (Washington: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 2001), 209.

⁸ Byman and Waxman, 109. The five factors that are identified in what Byman and Waxman term ‘US-style’ coercion are: 1) A preference for multilateralism; 2) An intolerance for US casualties; 3) An aversion to enemy suffering; 4) A reliance on high-technology; and 5) A commitment to international norms.

⁹ General Wesley Clark, *Waging Modern War* (Cambridge: The Perseus Books Group, 2001), 429.

¹⁰ Thomas Schelling, *Arms And Influence* (London: Yale University Press, 1966), 2.

¹¹ Robert Pape, *Bombing To Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 13.

¹² Daniel Byman, Matthew Waxman, and Eric Larson, *Air Power As A Coercive Instrument* (Washington: RAND, 1999), 18.

¹³ Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102.

¹⁴ The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, December 1999, 3.

¹⁵ Jeffery Record, “Weinberger-Powell Doctrine Doesn’t Cut It”, *Proceedings*, October 2000 Vol. 126/10/1, 172 (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Navy Institute, 2000), 35.

¹⁶ Daniel Byman and Mathew Waxman, “Defeating US Coercion”, *Survival*, Vol. 41, No 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Summer 1999), 109.

¹⁷ Major John Mattox, *Fifth-Century Advice for 21st-Century Leaders*, on-line, Internet, available from <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/English/mayjun98/mat.html> , 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 7.

¹⁹ David Lake, “The Self-Restrained Superpower: Entangling Relations and US Foreign Policy”, *Harvard International Review*, Fall 2000 (Harvard: Harvard International Review), 52.

²⁰ Sun Tzu, trans. by Ralph Sawyer, *Sun Tzu: Art of War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc, 1994), 177.

²¹ Colin Gray, 5-6.

²² Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, September 30, 2001, on-line, Internet, available from www.denfenselink.mil/pubs/qdr2001.pdf , iii.

²³ Edward Rhodes, “...From the Sea” and Back Again: Naval Power in the Second American Century”, *Naval War College Review*, Vol LII, No 2, Spring 1999, 23.

²⁴ John Dalton, J. Boorda, and Carl Mundy,Jr., *Forward....from the Sea*, Department of the Navy, 1994, 3.

²⁵ Mary Hampton, 229.

²⁶ Daniel Byman, Matthew Waxman, and Eric Larson, “Air Power as a Coercive Instrument”, xvi.

²⁷ D. Byman , Daniel Byman, Matthew Waxman, and Eric Larson, “Air Power as a Coercive Instrument”, xv – xvi.

²⁸ Appreciation to Dr. Grant Hammond for this insightful thought.

²⁹ Guilio Douhet, “The New Form of War “, trans. Dino Ferrari, found in *The Command of the Air* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), reprinted in *Strategy, Doctrine and Air Power* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2001), 98.

³⁰ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, 81.

³¹ Mary Hampton, 211.

³² John Tirpak, “Washington Watch: Short’s View of the Air Campaign”, *Air Force Magazine*, (September 1999, Volume 82, Number 9), on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.afa.org/magazine/watch/0999watch.html> , 3.

³³ Clausewitz, 119. Clausewitz refers often to those aspects of war that seem so simple but are difficult to execute particularly when faced with unique, unexpected events.

³⁴ Stephen Hosmer, “The Conflict Over Kosovo: Why Milosevic Decided To Settle When He Did”, *Rand Document*, (Rand Publications, 2001),on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR131/> , xxii

³⁵ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 197.

³⁶ H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 29.

³⁷ Flora Lewis, “Shine Light on the Lies Behind the Vietnam War”, *International Herald Tribune*, August 20, 2001, on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0820-01.htm> .

³⁸ Gen. Wesley Clark, 430.

³⁹ *Ibid.* , 5.

⁴⁰ Dr. Milan Vego, “Wake-Up Call in Kosovo”, *Proceedings*, Vol III No 3 (Annapolis: US Naval Institute, October 2000), 70.

⁴¹ Lt. Col. Paul C. Strickland, “USAF Aerospace-Power Doctrine Decisive or Coercive?”, *Aerospace Power Journal*, Vol XIV, No 3 (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, Fall 2000), 25.

⁴² Adm. Jay L. Johnson, *Forward....from the Sea: The Navy Operational Concept*, Department of the Navy, March 1997, on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/policy/fromsea/ffseanoc.html> , 4.

⁴³ Conversation with Lt. Col. Forrest Morgan, Faculty School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, January 2002.

⁴⁴ Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, “Defeating US Coercion”, *Survival*, Vol 41, No 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Summer 1999), 107.

⁴⁵ Gen. Clark, 423.

⁴⁶ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, 94.

⁴⁷ James A. Kitfield, “Another Look at the Air War That Was: Am Eaker Institute Panel Weighs the Implications of Operation Allied Force,” *Air Force Magazine*, Vol 82, No 10, October 1999, 39.

⁴⁸ Lt. Col. Charles Westenhoff compiler, *Military Air Power: The CADRE Digest of Air Power Opinions and Thoughts*, (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1990), 66.

⁴⁹ Statement by Dr. Grant Hammond, Air War College, 02 April 2002.

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